



# CALFED BAY-DELTA PROGRAM

## Program Overview Winter 1999

**T**he CALFED Bay-Delta Program is a cooperative effort among state and federal agencies and California's environmental, urban and agricultural communities. It was initiated in 1995 by Governor Pete Wilson and the Clinton administration to address environmental and water management problems associated with the Bay-Delta system, an intricate web of waterways created at the junction of the San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers and the watershed that feeds them.

### The Problem

Today the Bay-Delta system is in serious trouble. Habitats are declining, and some native species are listed as endangered. The system has suffered from impaired water quality. Water supply reliability has declined significantly. Many levees are structurally weak and present a high risk of failure. Ultimately, California's trillion-dollar economy, the seventh largest in the world, is at risk if Bay-Delta system environmental and water management problems are not resolved.

### Reasons To Care

- The Bay-Delta is the largest estuary on the west coasts of North and South America, home to plants and animals found nowhere else on the planet.
- More than 22 million Californians rely on the bay-Delta system for all or some of their drinking water.
- There is concern that Delta levees are vulnerable to failure, especially during earthquakes or periods of high runoff. Such a failure could flood farmland and wildlife habitat, and could contaminate the water supply and result in an interruption of water deliveries for urban and agricultural users.
- Millions of birds migrate through, and live in, the Bay-Delta, as do more than 53 species of fish, including one of the most productive natural salmon fisheries on the West Coast.
- Key industries, from agriculture to high-tech, require a plentiful supply of quality water to prosper. Also, attracting new business to the state requires water supply reliability.
- The Bay-Delta system is a key component of the state's \$24 billion agricultural industry, supply irrigation water to millions of acres of the world's most productive farmland.

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# Progress to Date

The CALFED Bay-Delta Program is divided into three phases.

**Phase I** – During Phase I, the CALFED Program concentrated on identifying and defining the problems confronting the Bay-Delta system. During Phase I a mission statement and guiding principles were developed, along with Program objectives and an array of potential actions to meet them. Three preliminary alternatives were identified for further analyses in Phase II. Phase I was completed in September 1996.

**Phase II** – During Phase II, currently underway, the Program is developing a preferred program alternative and conducting a comprehensive programmatic environmental review process. Because the CALFED solution area is so large, and because it is approaching its task in an integrated, comprehensive way, environmental review must be conducted on a very broad level. Phase II will conclude with the Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR). Final decision on the program plan is expected by June 2000.

**Phase III** – Program implementation will begin in Phase III, following completion of the final Programmatic EIS/EIR. The CALFED solution plan is expected to take 25 to 30 years to complete. Implementation is roughly divided into three stages, with Stage 1 lasting seven years.

Site specific, detailed environmental review will occur during Phase III, prior to the implementation of each proposed action. Stage 1 actions will be grouped into a series of “bundles” to provide additional assurances for balancing benefits. For example, a bundle of actions could include levee work, habitat improvements, water quality work, and facilities and operations to improve water supply reliability. Linking the actions will help assure that progress is made in all areas. Actions may be linked within the same project EIS/EIR, by contractual documents, geographically, through funding or other means.

## Environmental Review

The EIS/EIR is required by the National Environmental Policy Act (EIS) and the California Environmental Quality Act (EIR). The CALFED Draft Programmatic EIS/EIR was released March 16, followed by a 105-day public comment period.

Working with the state’s urban and agricultural water users, environmental organizations and others, the CALFED Program identified three conceptual alternatives to solve Bay-Delta system problems. Each alternative included actions to comprehensively address ecosystem restoration, water quality improvements, enhanced Delta levee system integrity, and increased water supply reliability. The three draft alternatives outlined in the documents differed primarily in how each would move and store water within the Bay-Delta system.

The document contained information on the program scope; potential impacts of solution alternatives and the no-action alternative; steps that have been and will continue to be taken to identify a preferred alternative; current regulatory climate and potential land use changes; and public involvement opportunities.

Seventeen public hearings were held around the state, and thousands of comments were received. Comments focused on five issues:

- Water conservation
- Storage and conveyance
- Agricultural issues
- Water Rights
- Finance

The comments were used to help revise program plans and develop the draft program alternative. How the Program responded to various issues will be addressed in the revised program plans and revised draft Programmatic EIS/EIR. The revised draft EIS/EIR is expected to be released in June 1999 and will be followed by a 90 day public comment period. The Final EIS/EIR is expected in June 2000.

## Draft Preferred Program Alternative

The Revised Phase II Report, outlining the draft preferred program alternative, was released December 18, 1998. The report outlines strategies for improving the four Bay-Delta resource areas – water supply, water quality, levee system integrity, and the ecosystem – through eight program elements. The eight program elements – water quality, water transfers, ecosystem restoration, long-term levee plan, watershed management, water use efficiency, storage and conveyance – are interrelated.

In January 1999, CALFED held five initial public workshops to present the draft preferred program alternative to the public. This provided the public with an opportunity to ask questions of the CALFED staff and to provide feedback that will be used in the continued development of a long-term solution.

The revised program plans, which are supporting documents to both the Revised Phase II Report and the Programmatic EIS/EIR, were released in February.

## Interim Assurances

On Dec. 15, 1994, state and federal agencies, working with agricultural, environmental and urban stakeholders reached agreement on water quality standards and related operating provisions that would provide environmental and water supply certainty.

At the end of 1998, the Accord was extended to Dec. 31, 1999, to allow the CALFED Program to continue work. The certified final Programmatic EIS/EIR will replace the Accord.

## Early Ecosystem Restoration Projects

While the work on drafting a preferred alternative is proceeding, certain ecosystem restoration projects already have begun. These are activities that will be beneficial to the system, regardless of the proposed alternative selected.

Over the last three years the CALFED Program has funded 171 projects for a total of approximately \$177 million. Funded projects have included fish screens and ladders, land acquisition, habitat restoration, and focused research and monitoring. Funding sources are stakeholder contributions, state Proposition 204 and the Federal Bay-Delta Act.

Approximately \$73 million is available for early ecosystem restoration projects and programs in 1999. Thirteen "directed programs" – projects designated by the Ecosystem Restoration Roundtable as having high priority to achieve ecosystem restoration goals – have been selected for funding at a total cost of approximately \$52 million.

The remaining funds will be spent on projects identified through public solicitation. The 1999 public solicitation package (PSP) for ecosystem restoration projects and programs will be available to the public on February 16. The solicitation will close on April 16 with recommendations for funding scheduled for June.

## Public Involvement

Success of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program depends upon the involvement and support of the public. Technical work groups, public meetings and workshops and the Bay-Delta Advisory Council (BDAC) provide opportunities for education and involvement in the decision-making process.

For information on participating in the CALFED Program, call the CALFED public information line at 800-700-5752 or visit the website at <http://calfed.ca.gov>.

*The mission of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program is to develop a long-term comprehensive plan that will restore ecological health and improve water management for beneficial uses of the Bay-Delta system*